Approved For Release 2008/12/10 : CIA-RDP86M00886R000200150021-4

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ICS-84-8113
26 October 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence
Director, Intelligence Community Staff
Deputy Director, Intelligence Community Staff

7 NOV 1984

FROM: [redacted]
Executive Secretary, NFIB

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SUBJECT: The Health of the National Foreign Intelligence Board and Council and Their Executive Secretariat

Mr. Casey,

1. The NFIB/NFIC principals agree unanimously that these mechanisms for Intelligence Community consultation and coordination are working better than they ever have.[1] The key principals, with a few exceptions, say they have long known and respect each other, and all have great things to say about your and John McMahon's leadership. They are highest of all about the off-site conferences, which one of them characterized as providing food for thought and the impetus to attempt action within their own departments.

2. Each of the principals believes he or she makes a unique contribution to NFIB/NFIC deliberations, whether it be the legal advisory role of the Justice Department, the military honest-broker role of the U.S. Marine Corps, or the combined collector-consumer role of the Under Secretary of the Air Force. They state that they are satisfied that their views are heard thoroughly in substantive discussions and are reflected completely in IC products.

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[1]The views expressed in this memorandum are based on my observation of one NFIC and five NFIB meetings, plus private interviews with all the NFIB/NFIC principals except Army ACSI Odom. I did not tell the principals these interviews were off the record, but neither did I get the sense that they would appreciate being quoted directly.

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CL BY: Signer
DECL: OADR

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3. That said, one detects among at least a minority of the principals a belief that NFIB, and particularly NFIC, deliberations sometimes are too cut and dried. Some principals who sit only on NFIC clearly would like to be heard on a broader range of intelligence policy issues than those that come before that body at its infrequent meetings. But even some NFIB members wish more topics were raised, either to become acquainted with your thinking on issues as they arise or to have a chance to be heard individually (perhaps thus to escape the conformist pressures of the Military Intelligence Board system).

4. To the extent that this minority view may have some merit, my own observation is that it has less to do with DCI and DDCI management of the consultative process than it does with the reticence of the other NFIB/NFIC principals in these meetings. The principals, it strikes me, are loath to intrude on each others' turf; rarely does a principal bring up a topic in response to your regular invitations to do so. And, when points of disagreement arise, most principals tend to take reserves on the position on the table, rather than to debate it vigorously. In practice, judging from my limited observation, the principals in fact prefer to remand issues to lower level coordinating mechanisms or to negotiate them bilaterally. Indeed, these lower level committees, panels, task forces, etc., may in part work as well as they do because most principals are very reluctant to take each other on in NFIB/NFIC meetings--i.e., at the very peak of the pyramid of the IC's consultative machinery.[2]

5. The only regular complaint voiced by NFIB principals concerned the aperiodic late delivery of papers for consideration at their meetings. Most voiced their appreciation that the problem has been eased substantially since the installation of the WANG NFIB communication system, and all recognized that papers inevitably will sometimes be held up when their representatives cannot agree on how to state a point of disagreement in an estimate. But the problem still gnaws at them; they hate to come to meetings less than thoroughly prepared.

6. We have one further improvement in the NFIB communication system budgeted for the current fiscal year, but it will make a difference in hours, not days, which is what the principals want. The WANG system, in addition, has inherent limitations (its slow printer, for example) which means that few further mechanical fixes can be made in the distribution system. In any

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[2]A few members speculated that the absence of more broad-ranging discussion at their meetings may simply reflect the temper of the times--i.e., relative resource largese and the administration's high regard for intelligence. These few speculated further that NFIB/NFIC meetings might automatically become more spirited, were these happy conditions to deteriorate in the years immediately ahead.

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case, the late-paper problem stems principally from the coordination process. Some principals would agree to declare a moratorium on changing papers for 72 hours or more preceeding meetings, despite what that might mean in terms of fouling up NFIB schedules and of longer and more contentious NFIB meetings. For such a moratorium to work, DIA's thorough cooperation would be essential.[3]

7. As for the NFIB/NFIC/SIG(I) secretariat, itself, it is, and has been, providing useful services to the Community: it sees that the papers get delivered, it is a registry of record for certain Community documents, it is the Community's historical memory on matters that have come before the three bodies it serves, and it is the keeper of the official record of the decisions you announce at the meetings.[4] But I found, upon taking this post three months ago, that the secretariat was otherwise outside the mainstream of Community business.

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[3]The disarray that sometimes manifests itself at the NFIB results less from the late delivery of estimates to principals than it does from the Military Intelligence Board's (MIB) practice of meeting on estimates only 24 to 48 hours before NFIB meetings. No military service principal can sign on to an estimate, either personally or through his representative, until after the MIB meets--ergo, inevitable last minute emendations from DIA and the services. Any moratorium, to be of help to you, would have to go into effect after MIB meetings, yet such a practice would make NFIB scheduling hostage to DIA's willingness to move out smartly. This strikes me as a highly risky proposition. Nor would a moratorium have a felicitous effect on the practice by some non-service principals' of not concerning themselves with an estimate until it is ready for NFIB and then repudiating the positions taken by their representative during the coordination process. Both these conditions (a late MIB and a principal's reversal of his representative) occurred during consideration of the chemical warfare estimate and produced a predictable result--i.e., a delay in the approval of an estimate and bad feelings all around.

[4]Except for the writing of the minutes, the tasks required to fulfill these responsibilities are largely mechanical. They are, at the same time, time consuming, need to be accomplished quickly, and demand a thorough knowledge of who does what in the multiple organizations that make up the Intelligence Community. The Secretariat has been reduced during the past year (from a full to a part-time deputy and from three to two clericals), but appears able (albeit sometimes somewhat frantically) to shoulder the current workload. We are acquiring the part-time services of a NIC staff officer to have an agent at Headquarters.

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Staff support for you and the DDCI: The secretariat was essentially doing very little for you. Traditionally, the secretariat has assembled and forwarded to the DDCI for his review the monthly reports of the DCI Committees and forwarded back to them any comments he has made. Also, the secretariat has canvassed the NFIB principals prior to your periodic meetings with the PFIAB to compile a list of their independent dealings with that Board since your last meeting with it and to solicit their suggestions as to what issues you might raise. It is not clear to me that this practice has been of any particular value to you, and [redacted] will 25X1
be talking to Jim Taylor about how, if at all, the secretariat can better
serve you on PFIAB matters. More importantly, in the future at [redacted] 25X1
[redacted] suggestion, we will take responsibility for assembling your 25X1
briefing books for NFIB/NFIC/SIG(I) meetings, a job that was previously parcelled out among the IC Staff, the NIC, and your executive secretariat at Headquarters. We have also begun drafting just before NFIB meetings short notes that bring you up-to-date on late changes in the agenda or shifts in positions by principals, a practice you have said you appreciate. We are prepared to do anything else you might wish.

The estimative process: I initially found the secretariat totally dependent on the paper that flowed through it for its knowledge of how estimates were progressing and of what issues were proving nettlesome, a totally inadequate situation. At Bob Gates' kind invitation, the secretariat is now attending National Intelligence Council staff meetings and otherwise interacting more broadly with the NIOs; the secretariat's isolation on substantive matters has largely been overcome.

The resource planning and budgeting process: Except when these matters come before the NFIC three or four times a year, this secretariat is not involved in the resource allocation process, or even aware of what is transpiring. I do not sense that the process suffers from the secretariat's isolation from it, or that the secretariat could particularly facilitate the process even were it more involved.

Ad hoc intelligence policy and other issues: Given the secretariat's isolation from any regular flow of information on these issues, the secretariat is normally unaware of them until someone schedules--or actually raises--them for discussion at an NFIB-NFIC-SIG(I) meeting. When we have lead time--e.g., the critical warning requirements and the WSSIC guidelines for protecting sources and methods--we do our homework to understand the issue, see to it that all the appropriate parties are aware that the issue will be raised, and get the papers to the principals that allow them to discuss the matter knowledgeably. We are encouraging the principals to give us a "heads-up" when they plan to raise issues--e.g., the security of military intelligence facilities in Europe--so that we can

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alert the other principals--and especially you.[5] But we have not pushed this hard, lest we inhibit any spontaneity the principals may from time to time feel. In order to prepare you and the DDCI better for SIG(I) meetings, we will work more closely with the Chief of the Community Counterintelligence Staff in his capacity as Executive Secretary of the IG(CI) and IG(CM).

It is my intuitive sense that we should be doing more for you, the DDCI, and the principals in this area, but what that should be has not yet come to me. We will try to get at this by following more faithfully your correspondence with NFIB/NFIC principals, and we would appreciate being included whenever you meet with them as a group so that we can gain greater continuity in our understanding of your interaction with them on these issues.[6]

8. The bottom line is that this secretariat is here to serve you and the DDCI in your capacities as leaders of the Intelligence Community. Since taking the secretariat over, and after confering with the NFIB/NFIC principals and other key players in the consultative process, I have taken the initiatives I have judged likely to facilitate that process. Nothing is "broke," but maybe it can work better. We welcome any instructions you might care to provide.

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[5]The principals all say they appreciate being alerted in advance to all issues to be raised at a meeting, including by you and John.

[6]Important discussions were held at the last off-site conference on leaks, which come up repeatedly at the NFIB, and on the larger issues related to the WSSIC guidelines, to which the secretariat only became privy when it was necessary for the secretariat subsequently to deal with follow-on problems.

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